THE STARVING MILLIONS IN INDIA

Scenes Tragic and Picturesque Described by Gilson Willets.

Special correspondence of The Florida Star.

AHMEDNAGAR, India. May 19 .- On my way to India I supposed I was traveling 10,000 miles to watch 10,000,000 people starve to death. After repeated visits to the great relief camps, however, I find I have come 10,000 miles to watch the Anglo-Saxon races in the act of saving the lives of millions of the "Aryan brown."

Besides these particular 10,000,000 of famine sufferers whose wants are immediate there are 40,000,000 others who in bands of 10,000 or more may at any



DR. LOUIS KLOPSCH.

moment cry out for food. But for the present I can write only of the 10,000,-000 who are absolutely dependent upon government or private charity.

Of these nearly 6,000,000 are fed and clothed and kept alive at the numerous government relief camps. As many as possible of the remaining 4,000,000 are being cared for by missionaries with money supplied by foreign contributions, notably American.

There is no better thermometer of eter, indicate the rise and fall in the the greatest number of sufferers. intensity of the famine; they show the the number of people being cared for

exact figures 5,611,000. These government relief camps are of three kinds-first, petty camps, in ing of a great multitude of weavers charge of a native, where not more than 1,000 people are fed; second, great camps, in charge of an English ed by the money contributed by the engineer, where from 10,000 to 15,000 people are given work; third, moving camps, in charge of a native-camps of a few hundred people, who are employed in roadmaking and who change their base of operations every few days as the work progresses.

At a town called Kedgaon, 150 miles from Bombay, I had my first glimpse of life at a relief station. This was the petty station, called Warwand can a, where 800 people were employed in breaking stone and in carrying the broken stone to spots convenient for the repair of the highway.

This Warwand camp is in the center of the Deccan, a great desert plain in the center of the Bombay presidency. Imagine a vast desert of brown parched earth, where never a green thing rests the eye, where you breathe hot air that well nigh suffocates you, where not an insect sound is heard, where only carrion birds hover in the still and dreadful air, where the sun looks like a disk of brass pasted on the sky, and you have the environment of the setting of this government camp.

Then, in the midst of this desert place, picture for yourself a hundred heaps of gray, jagged rocks, each heap swarming with human beings, who, with chisel and hammer, are breaking the rocks into stones. The sun, cruel and relentless, beats down its scorehing rays upon uncovered heads, and the hot air tries to absorb the ripe moisture yet in their poor, shriveled. shrunken bodies. The skin of these people looks like tanned leather. Their bones present an outline as of a skeleton. Never a song is heard-only the click, click of the hammers. Never a smile is seen-only a gria of what may be called a glad despair when the sun settles low on the herizon, when the hours of stone breaking are nearly over, when the 2 cents for the day's work is almost earned.

Two-thirds of these sad, silent be-. ings crouching on the rocks are women. Here are nursing mothers with babe at breast; here are women about to become mothers; here are little girls only 8 years old bearing a red mark on their foreheads, giving notice that they are married; here are girls only 14 years of age with shaved heads, indicating that they have even so soon reached widowhood. All these, with the men breaking stones at 2 cents a day, in order to keep life in their poor bodies!

The government famine code says

mothers shall be supported without having to work; but, with every desire on the part of government to carry out the letter of the code, native officials frequently overlook certain clauses.

The second camp I visited was the big camp at Ahmednagar, where 15,000 people are employed building a great reservoir for the storage of water for the city.

A tonge, or pony jaunting cart, carried us from Ahmednagar across the parched country to this great camp, called Kapurwadi. Again two-thirds of the workers were women. The scenes of the little camp visited the day before were here repeated on a colossal scale. Here were 5,000 women carrying pans of mud and mortar on their heads-women reduced to mere burden bearers. I saw neither shovels nor picks. Each woman simply gathered up the earth in her hands, packed It into a sort of dishpan with which she was provided, carried the load on her head to the great embankment, then returned, in line with hundreds of her sisters, for another load. Thus with the hands of women a great hole is being dug and a great wall being built, these two things-the hole and the wall-forming a reservoir in the heart of the dreadful desert of India.

Meanwhile at more than a hundred stations missionaries shelter many thousands. Widows and orphans, the aged and helpless little children and famine sufferers generally are givenwork, are fed and clothed and taught to look up instead of down, all by the wise expenditure of moneys supplied chiefly by the American people. Dr. Louis Klopsch of The Christian Herald, who is himself in India at this moment, journeying from camp to camp in pony cart or ox cart or by any means of transportation the country affords, is, if one may judge by the cordial greetings, public demonstrations and the recognition of the press everywhere in his honor and in compliment to his philanthropic work here, easily the most popular and most welcome American in India today pext to that gracious lady, the vicereine.

I went with Dr. Klopsch to one of the great relief camps and accompanied him on his tour of inspection. The main object of his visit here is to see and learn for himself how gigantic rethe famine than a government relief lief measures may be organized and camp. These camps, like a thermom- most quickly applied to the needs of

During the famine of 1897 he sent increase or decrease in the number of here more than \$400,000 and a shipload sufferers according to the number of of corn for the relief of the starving. people at the relief works. Last week This time he will raise fully \$1,000,000. He is awaiting the arrival of the reby the government increased by 61,000, lief ship Quito, chartered by the Amerso that the total of persons cared for | ican government and loaded with corn by the government is at this writing in by The Christian Herald, which is now on her way here.

Yesterday, at Ahmednagar, a gatherwho had been benefited and whose very lives in some cases had been sav-American people swarmed around Dr.



Klopsch with gifts of sweet smelling flowers made up into bouquets and garlands. The interpreter told me that the weavers metaphorically were prostrating themselves in the dust at the feet of the "sahib" and begged him to accept the flowers as an expression of their appreciation of his work. Dr. Klopsch touched the flowers in token of acceptance and then told the interpreter to announce that he could not consent to the decoration and that if personally add 100 rupees to the municipal fund for the relief of the poor and needy.

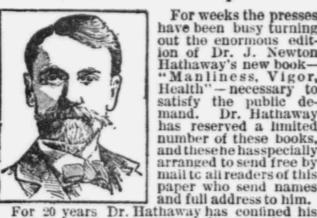
To return to the great relief camp. where I am writing this, the people work all day, from sunrise to sunset, in the scorching, devitalizing heat, save during the two hottest hours at midday. At night they return to their that pregnant women and nursing | tents of matting, little abodes supplied

by the government and laid out like a military camp. Each tent is numbered. and four persons are allotted to each tent. The men are at one end of the great encampment, the women at the other. Where whole families are employed every attempt is made to keep these families together, a whole field being set aside for tents big enough to accommodate families of four or

So much for the dramatic and picturesque side of the famine. The tragic side is a sight that brings tears. If one could describe the awfulness of the tragic scene, the pitiful sight of thousands of lives now ebbing away because of the too great lack of food, before coming to this haven; if one could unfold before the eyes of the American nation the panorama of the famine stricken portion of India, with its millions of starving, naked people. the purses of a whole nation would be opened wide to give money to wipe such misery off the surface of the GILSON WILLETS.

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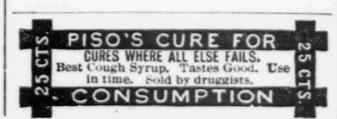
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